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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003080

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT GHAZI URGES STRONG AMERICAN ROLE IN
IRAQ AS HE PREPARES TO JET OFF

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford.
Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary. Vice President Ghazi al Yawar advocated that the newly arrived Ambassador establish a strong presence at this critical time in Iraq's history. Yawar pledged to address economic development initiatives, promote public outreach on the constitutional referendum and noted the need to address allegations of human rights abuses by the ISF. He spoke briefly on his approach toward the Syrian leadership. End Summary.

2. (C) Ambassador paid his first courtesy call on Deputy President Ghazi al-Yawar on July 24. Yawar raised the necessity to provide adequate security for the Sunni members of the constitution committee in the wake of the assassination of two of their colleagues. Assuring the Ambassador that the Sunnis would continue to participate in the constitution process, he dismissed the possibility of a "Hariri type" investigation of the murders of Mujbil Shaykh al-Issa and expert committee member Dhamin Hussein Aleiwi al Obeidi. Instead he said -- based on discussions in the Cabinet -- that the judicial branch would take the lead on the investigation, perhaps including onto the investigatory commission some relatives of the slain men. He criticized public statements by Sunni politicians that "high ranking members of the government with connections to militias" were behind the assassinations. He stressed that the Badr Corps had nothing to do with the murders. "Not even the Kurds" were involved, he stated flatly.

Preparing for Referendum;
Need for Secularists to Coalesce

3. (C) Yawar urged the Ambassador to make a strong presence felt at this critical juncture, observing that only the political pressure applied by Paul Bremer assured the Transitional Administrative Law's successful and timely completion. He noted the need for a greater public outreach campaign on constitution issues. In particular, it would be important to dissuade the Sunni Arabs that federalism equated Iraq's "dismemberment". Describing his fellow moderates (Adnan Pachachi, Ayad Allawi, and Nasir Chardachi) as "heads without roots", he observed that their (and his) failure to form a coalition of secularists was a loss for all. He noted he was maintaining a low profile in the constitutional drafting process. He said this was in response to criticism from his fellow Sunni Arabs who said he had chosen "his own cabinet". Yawar strongly endorsed the proposed summit of political party leaders to iron out the last obstacles to a final draft of the constitution.

Tough Words for the Syrians

4. (C) Yawar claimed he "had a word with Bashar" al-Assad regarding the support ex-Ba'athists enjoy in Syria. He said insurgents and their financiers openly boast about their ability to operate from Syria and that he warned Bashar "these are the same Saddamists who were trying to assassinate your father". He reportedly told the leader that he had the opportunity to be the "Anwar Sadat" of Syria should he end his support for terrorism. The Ambassador cautioned about advocating a regime change, since the next most powerful political force in Syria is the Muslim Brotherhood. Yawar endorsed the Ambassador's suggestion of a proposed inter-Arab anti-terrorism summit, noting he had warned the Saudis and Kuwaitis that terrorism would not stop at Iraq's borders. Yawar praised the bravery of the recently assassinated Egyptian Charge d'Affaires and the "very helpful" Bahraini charge d'Affaires, who was also injured in a terrorist attack.

Addressing Allegations of Human Rights Violations

15. (C) The Vice President derided official denials of involvement of Iraqi Security Forces in the series of kidnappings, apparent torture and murder of Sunnis in outlying areas of Baghdad province. He said Ministry of Interior claims that six to seven car motorcades that allegedly conducted the raid were organized and carried out by "phoney cops". Yawar observed, "When police do it, it is far worse" than violence perpetuated by the insurgents. He likened it to the government taking one side in a conflict. The Emergency Law aside, he proposed requiring all arrests be legitimized within 24 hours by order of a judge (Note: This is already a right embodied in the TAL End Note.).

Security Role for the Tribes?

16. (C) Yawar debunked a recent (alleged) proposal by Prime Minister Jafari to allow local militias assume responsibility for security in their areas. He claimed Jafari was also pushing to reinstate tribal involvement in security affairs. The Vice President ridiculed such an initiative, observing, "If you give shaykhs money and power, you will get Lebanon". On the other hand, earlier in the meeting he praised his own tribe's ability to maintain peace in his native region northeast of Mosul. He attributed the allegedly lack of attacks on Coalition Forces in "his lands" to his success in convincing his fellow Shammar that economic development could only proceed after the area was secure. He termed the economic battle as critical, and advocated employment for the "angry, young men" who now sit around listening to hateful speeches of their local imams.

17. (C) Comment. Yawar is as Yawar was: positioned to play a positive role in resolving issues that most concern the Sunnis but quite unreliable. He could press the Iraqi administration from the inside to review human rights abuse allegations and shape the type of investigation in ways that would ease the fears of the broader Sunni Arab community and facilitate the political process. Educated and worldly, he could shape the debate in the nervous Sunni Arab community about the positives of a federalist vision for Iraq and how it would help, not hurt, the minority Sunni Arabs. However, he is not someone upon whom we can count. Indeed, just as constitutional debates really heats up in Baghdad, Ghazi is about to fly off to Bahrain for at least five days where he likely will relax and try to raise money for his own political aspirations. Post will continue to push this well-placed Sunni leader to exert his influence on behalf of Sunni Arab outreach, but it is important to remember the limitations of the man. End Comment.

18. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Khalilzad